



MT VICTORIA

Historical Society News

For more information contact:

Joanna Newman on 385 2254 (hm)

Alan Olliver on 385 1022 (hm)

No. 34 July 2005

Wellington History in Film

Saturday, August 6 at 2.30 pm

**New Zealand Film Archive
84 Taranaki Street**

Join us for a programme of film on historical Wellington, put together especially for the Historical Society.
Friends and family welcome.

Entry by koha (suggested \$5.00)

Walk Wellington

Walk Wellington is a not-for-profit organisation which runs guided walks around the central city. They're looking for volunteer guides – people who are enthusiastic and passionate about Wellington, and who enjoy meeting people. Volunteers meet great people – Wellingtonians and visitors to the city – and learn a lot about our fabulous city. There is a selection process but, if selected, guides receive full training. Guiding would take only 3-5 hours a month (more if one wants!) and costs are reimbursed for each tour a guide takes.

If you think you might be interested in becoming a guide, or for more information about Walk Wellington, contact Sue Chamberlain on 384 9590 (leave a message if there's no-one home) or email walkwellington@xtra.co.nz.

If you don't want to be a guide, but would like to help Walk Wellington in some other way, call Sue to talk about other jobs that need to be done.

AGM on September 18 at 4.00 pm

Join us for our AGM on Sunday September 18 with guest speaker Zisis Bruce Blades, who will talk to us about his book *Wellington's Hellenic Mile*. This will be an interesting follow-up to our talk a few years ago about the Greek community in Mt Victoria, by Stathy Boolieris. The AGM will be followed by wine and Greek-style nibbles.

Jas. Farley, Butcher

Many will have noticed, or read about, the demolition of Jas. Farley's Butcher shop at 12 Majoribanks St recently. Joanna Newman has just received a letter from his grandson, Jim Farley, in the Wairarapa. Among other things he shares with us is detail about the photo we reproduced in Newsletter No. 27 (which didn't get a number!). He tells us that the young man driving the cart developed a drink problem after he left his grandfather's employ, had an accident from a cart and was killed. Jim's father, Harold, told him that in Kent Terrace there was a Chinese laundry. From his bedroom at No. 4 he could see into the backyards below and on Sunday mornings he would see the men washing their hair and plaiting their pigtails. He also said that a man used to come into Wellington from the Hutt with a load of oat sheaves and they would purchase some for the horses. The horses would lie down to sleep so it wasn't so hard on their legs.

More interesting and colourful detail about life in the Butcher's shop and in Majoribanks Street in the early 1900's.

HISTORICAL NOTE

THE COURTENAY PLACE CABLE CAR

By Jim Harper

Mt Victoria has long-standing links with the transport industry and right now one of those is receiving some attention.

Wooden cable cars once ran between Lambton Quay and Kelburn, from 1902 until they were replaced with the current Swiss-made ones in 1979. Two covered the route regularly, but many people do not know that there was actually also a third “grip car”. (The “grip car” is the main cable car in which the driver sits, and its motion is controlled by pulling levers to operate a mechanism that grips the driving cable.) The third car looked different from the others and was not used on a regular basis because it did not match the other two in appearance or specifications. It was much lighter, and the drivers (called “gripmen”) did not like the cabin because it was only about half as big as that of the other cars. As a result, Car 3 was the odd one out; it was used rarely and then only as a standby when one of the others was being repaired.

Earlier this year, while a restoration team¹ was stripping down the coachwork of Car 3 in preparation for rebuilding it, they were surprised to discover the maker’s name in gold leaf behind some later fittings, and again in another part behind fire-damaged panelling. It was “The Rouse and Hurrell Company Limited, Builders, Wellington”. The signage confirmed that Car 3 was made locally and the product of Courtenay Place-based firm, Rouse and Hurrell.

Rouse and Hurrell was a coachbuilding company established by William Black in 1859. Mr Black lived in Brougham Street and his business partner, Mr Rouse, lived at Edge Hill. Their business grew to become very successful and by the 1890’s they had a big workshop where the Ford Building in Courtenay Place now stands. Their premises were 12,000 square feet, built of wood and iron, with a large frontage. In 1897 they employed 25 staff and made a variety of carriages, large and small, including buggies, officers’ dog carts, gigs, landaus, and many other styles of vehicles. Their equipment included a circular saw, planing machines, turning lathes, band saws and machinery for rounding felloes.² (A felloe is the central hub of a carriage wheel that the wheel spokes bed into. And, if you’re wondering about “dog carts”, they were for *transporting* dogs, such as a pack of hunting hounds.)

To make things more complicated for historians, Frederick Rouse left Rouse and Hurrell and teamed up with Robert and Henry Black to form Rouse, Black and Son, around 1894. All had worked at Rouse and Hurrell at some stage and, according to the entries in the 1897 Cyclopaedia, the principals of both companies seem pleased to acknowledge their linkages. Competition between companies in the transport sector must have been managed in a very civilized way back then! Rouse, Black and Son operated at 66A Cambridge Terrace for many years – later being taken over by the Colonial Motor Company CMC. Accordingly, they were among the earliest inhabitants of Wellington’s “automobile alley”- Cambridge Terrace.

Car 3 was delivered in 1904 to the Kelburne and Karori Tramway Company. That company had big plans for their cable car system and intended to take it on to Karori - in a straight line. The idea was that the cable car line would go up and down over the hills all the way to the Karori Tunnel and, of course, they would need more than two cars for such a system. Unfortunately, this Victorian Think Big project never went further because the Company had enough problems making a profit just on the city to Kelburne section. Perhaps Rouse and Hurrell hoped to make a fleet of cars for the company as the line extended but, in the event, Car 3 was the last cable car ever made for this line. Made 101 years ago by Rouse and Hurrell, Car 3 can justifiably be called the Courtenay Place Cable Car, and it will be on display later this year.

Remember the fire damage mentioned earlier that resulted in the panels being covered over? Well, recent research has shown that the cable car used to have oil lamps to light up the interior at night and one night a fire started. The fire was getting along nicely when a man in a suit noticed it and put it out, - apparently using his clothing for the purpose. He possibly saved Car 3 from destruction, and the directors of the company recognised his act; they generously voted one pound (\$2) as thanks and compensation!



Cable Car 3 in storage



Cable Car 3 at Kelburn, 1905 [ATL F-104796]

¹ Car 3 is being restored according to a conservation plan prepared by Colin Perfect, a Wellington Transport Historian. The work is being carried out by Greg Lang the Wheelwright, Gladstone, who, incidentally, also has a local connection - Langs Mitre 10 is his family’s business. When restored, the car will be the centrepiece of the Cable Car Museum’s display and will be on view later this year in a new extension being built onto the current museum building – which is the old shed where Car 3 spent most of its life.

² Cyclopaedia of New Zealand, 1897